

**Thomas Jefferson to Levi Lincoln, March 24, 1802, from  
The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes.  
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Ford.**

**TO THE ATTORNEY GENERAL J. MSS. (LEVI LINCOLN.)**

Mar. 24, 1802.

I had no conception there were persons enough to support a paper whose stomachs could bear such aliment as the enclosed papers contain. They are far beyond even the Washington *Federalist*. To punish however is impracticable until the body of the people, from whom juries are to be taken, get their minds to rights; and even then I doubt its expediency. While a full range is proper for actions by individuals, either private or public, for slanders affecting them, I would wish much to see the experiment tried of getting along without public prosecutions for *libels*. I believe we can do it. Patience and well doing, instead of punishment, if it can be found sufficiently efficacious, would be a happy change in the instruments of government.

Health & affectionate salutations.